

Malaysian focus

By Nicholas Ting
MA Student

JUST A PASSING COMMENT

Being in Canada, thousands of miles away from home, means being among people having different customs altogether. And it is not easy to achieve a closeness with the local people. A first approach to build up friendship comes rare from the locals and our attempts, more often than not, result in mere acquaintances rather than close friendships. Of course, such situations can be explained by many sociological factors, this problem does not exist for our fellow counterparts at home, say in Malaya University.

The article in Malaysian Focus by Eddie, touching on the need for unity among us in Fredericton, has greatly impressed me in the sense that a very sincere and valid point has been made. Unity is strength and something that we should collectively seek for by using the platform provided by our society. Even the first Secretary to the Malaysian High Commission in Ottawa (on his recent visit to UNB) has stressed the need for unity in our small community so that we can proudly carry the Malaysian flag. For emphasizing such an idea, Eddie has been branded as 'Bapa M.S.S.' and has been said, 'A New Star is born'. It seems that a new Hero is born too.

A year has passed me by here and very soon, probably to the delight of many, I will be bidding farewell to the university precinct. I cannot help observing and mentioning that we, in Fredericton, are in the same boat suffering from an over-abundance of small groups - too many small cliques and too many differences of opinion that surface into undesirable effects. Is that the Malaysian image we are trying to project here? I hope not. I find such psychological condition appalling and I believe that this opinion is not my own only.

A comment on the 'Malaysian Focus Attack' article. The writer's sarcastic remarks seem to criticize Eddie and his advocacy of unity. Indeed he suggested that the Malaysian has crowded into Graham to form a Chinatown for the sake of unity. To clarify on this point, I must point out that there are many cliques even on this road alone, within the Malaysian community. For his information, the sole reason to explain the fact that so many Malaysians stay in Graham is because it is near to the campus and many apartments can be found there. There has NEVER been an intention of having a Chinatown. The hero seems to suggest that the Malaysians should not cluster together in Graham. I would like to ask: do you prefer to stay far away from campus when you can have a place near UNB? Maybe he is fortunate enough to afford limousine service to campus every day.

It is my strong belief, after having being closely linked with similar society across the Atlantic for three years, that despite our apparent differences, we have the all-conquering Malaysian ability to form strong bonds with each other - in the midst of the joy, jokes and laughter, arguments and... without the aid of a chinatown, be it in Fredericton or at home. Therefore let us forge ahead in unity and make our contribution to a more progressive society, upholding our Malaysian name. No matter where we may be or in whatever we do, we are all still Malaysians.

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Downey explains issues

UNB President Dr. James Downey describes the time since he has held the tenure of president as the "most stimulating period of my life." He was the guest speaker on CHSR-FM's Feedback program Tuesday.

Downey said the challenges have been "multifarious," but the "fine people" he worked with in the administration have been "very supportive." He said his colleagues were very hospitable and have a positive attitude, but are not at all non-critical. "They have all given me very valuable support; it would have been much more difficult to do my job without them," he said.

One of the subjects brought up on the program was whether the government should fund just those areas of study having a high demand in the job-market. Downey said the university has a broader mandate, "we can't just produce computer scientists."

He described two methods the federal government could use to transfer funds directly to the universities. They could entice students into certain programs by giving students in those programs vouchers for their education; or they could

target money within universities to improve certain programs.

Both these methods he was opposed to. Downey said higher education has been traditionally a provincial affair with the federal government only directly funding research. He said to be successful, target funding must be based on accurate labor market projections; he pointed out projecting is yet a science. Such funding would be disastrous for faculties not involved, he said.

Downey said students are

now paying less of the university's total operating expenses than they were a few years ago. He said this is not because they refused to pay, but because it has been deemed a good social policy to keep fees down.

With regard to library cut-backs, Downey said he regretted the cuts in the book and journal acquisitions, but pointed out that all university departments are faced with lack of money. He said he did not think there was a serious morale problem with the library staff.

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